

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5638

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 6078

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TH, BM, LA

SUBJECT: GUNS-FOR-NARCOTICS TRADING

REF: (A) STATE 156066

(B) RANGOON 1893

(C) BANGKOK 11351

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BEGIN SUMMARY: EMBASSY WELCOMES DEPARTMENT SUGGESTION THAT GUNS-FOR NARCOTICS TRADE SHOULD BE ATTACKED ON TRI-COUNTRY BASIS.

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE HAS BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH RLG TO ESTABLISH AND TIGHTEN WEAPONS CONTROL SYSTEMS WITH THE LAO MILITARY, POLICE AND OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES RECEIVING U.S. ARMS. BECAUSE OF THESE EFFORTS, AS WELL AS DIMINUTION OF WAR IN LAOS, WE BELIEVE LAOS IS NO LONGER SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF INSURGENT WEAPONS. HOWEVER, WE LOOK FORWARD TO DISCUSSING THIS PROBLEM AT FORTHCOMING TRI-COUNTRY NARCOTICS MEETING IN BANGKOK. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS EMBASSY, OF COURSE, AGREES WITH SUGGESTION MADE REFTEL A
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THAT EFFORT SHOULD BE MOUNTED IN GOLDEN TRIANGLE COUNTRIES TO

ELIMINATE THE GUNS-FOR-NARCOTICS TRADE. CLEARLY, SUCCESS IN SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD NOT ONLY IMPACT FAVORABLY ON NARCOTICS SITUATION, BUT WOULD HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS WITHIN AND BETWEEN COUNTRIES CONCERNED.

2. IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL A, WE HAVE CAREFULLY REVIEWED RLG PROCEDURES FOR CONTROLLING AND ACCOUNTING FOR MILITARY AND POLICE WEAPONS. SUCH PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN RECENTLY REVISED AND TIGHTENED TO ACCORD WITH PROCEDURES USED IN THE UNITED STATES.

(A) IN THE CASE OF WEAPONS PROVIDED BY USG TO RLGA, ALL ARE NOW ACCOUNTED FOR BY TYPE AND SERIAL NUMBER. TRANSFER OF SUCH PROPERTY FROM USG TO RESPONSIBLE FAR PERSONNEL (INCLUDING MILITARY POLICE) IS CAREFULLY DOCUMENTED. SPECIFICALLY, WEAPONS OBTAINED BY FAR ARE DOCUMENTED BY ORDNANCE PERSONNEL AND EACH INDIVIDUAL WEAPON IS RECORDED BY SERIAL NUMBER. THUS, WEAPONS ARE TRACEABLE TO THE FAR UNIT TO WHICH THEY WERE ISSUED. ANY WEAPONS LOST IN COMBAT BY FAR REGULAR FORCES ARE DOCUMENTED BY SERIAL NUMBER AND SO REPORTED THROUGH CHANNELS TO THE FAR G-4. SINCE THIS SYSTEM WAS INSTITUTED, WE KNOW OF NO SIGNIFICANT DIVERSIONS OF WEAPONS FROM THE FAR LOGISTICS SYSTEM. IF THE BURMESE ARMY WERE TO CAPTURE "NEW-TYPE WEAPONS," MENTIONED PARA 3 REFTEL A, FROM VARIOUS INSURGENT AND/OR DRUG TRAFFICKING GROUPS, THIS NEW SYSTEM SHOULD ALLOW US TO TRACE THE WEAPON IN QUESTION TO THE UNIT LEVEL.

(B) AS FOR THE LAO NATIONAL POLICE (LNP), THEY ARE ISSUED 38-CALIBER PISTOLS, M-1 AND M-2 CARBINES, AND 12-GUAGE SHOTGUNS, NOT NEW-TYPE WEAPONS SUCH AS M-16S, M-79S, ETC. USAID'S PUBLIC SAFETY DIVISION (PSD) AND LNP ORDNANCE SECTION MAINTAIN CARDEX STOCK RECORDS ON ALL WEAPONS FURNISHED BY USG TO LNP. ALL WEAPONS ARE ISSUED TO THE COMMANDER OF A PARTICULAR POLICE UNIT WHO MAINTAINS A RECORD OF EACH WEAPON ISSUED TO AN INDIVIDUAL. THE PSD, THE LNP ORDNANCE SECTION AND THE RECEIVING LNP UNIT RECORD THE WEAPONS BY SERIAL NUMBER. WHEN A POLICEMAN IS TRANSFERRED FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER, HIS WEAPON REMAINS WITH THE UNIT AND IS REASSIGNED TO ANOTHER POLICE OFFICER. BOTH PSD AND LNP MAKE PERIODIC INSPECTIONS TO VERIFY THE LOCATION OF WEAPONS ASSIGNED TO EACH POLICE UNIT.

3. WEAPONS UTILIZED BY GENERAL KHAMHOU'S GROUPE SPECIAL D'INVESTI-
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GATION (GSI) CONSIST OF 45-CALIBER PISTOLS, 38-CALIBER REVOLVERS AND 15 M-1 CARBINES. THE SERIAL NUMBERS FOR THESE WEAPONS ARE RECORDED AT THE NARCOTICS ATTACHE'S OFFICE AND ALSO AT GSI ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE. A CARD FOR EACH WEAPON INDICATES THE PERSON TO WHOM IT HAS BEEN ISSUED AND THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THAT PERSON'S DUTY STATION. AS OF THIS DATE, ONLY TWO GSI WEAPONS HAVE BEEN LOST, BOTH OF THEM DURING AN EFFORT ON AUGUST 20 TO RETAKE THE LAO NATIONAL RADIO STATION WHICH HAD BEEN CAPTURED BY REBELS DURING

THE ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT IN VIENTIANE.

4. FOR RANGOON: FOREGOING INFORMATION RESPONDS TO QUESTIONS
POSED PARA 6 REFTEL B. RE BURMESE "ANNOYANCE" THAT LAO ARE
SOURCE OF U.S.-ORIGIN WEAPONS USED BY INSURGENTS, WE FEEL THAT
LEAKAGE THAT MAY HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE DURING WARTIME, AND PRIOR TO
INTEGRATION OF LAO IRREGULAR FORCES INTO FAR, IS NO LONGER A SERI-
OUS PROBLEM. LIKEWISE, THE REMOVAL OF THAI SGUS FROM LAOS SHOULD
CUT OFF ANOTHER POSSIBLE SOURCE. AS FOR THE M-16 CAPTURED AT MUONG
MAU, BEARING SERIAL NUMBER SN 319-2150, IT CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED
AS ONE ISSUED UNDER THE MASF PROGRAM. PER AMEMBASSY RANGOON'S
REQUEST, PARA 7 REFTEL B, WE WOULD NOT OBJECT TO EMBASSY INFORMING
GUB OF THE RLG WEAPON CONTROL PROCEDURES OUTLINED ABOVE AND GIVING
GUB ASSURANCES THAT THIS MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO REVIEW RLG
WEAPONRY CONTROL SYSTEM WITH RLG OFFICIALS TO ASSURE THAT MOST
EFFECTIVE PROCEDURES ARE BEING UTILIZED TO KEEP U.S-ORIGIN
WEAPONS OUT OF INSURGENT HANDS. WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO COOPERATE WITH
RANGOON AND BANGKOK ON TRACING INSURGENT WEAPONS SHOULD GUB SUPPLY
THE SERIAL NUMBERS. NOWEVER, AS BANGKOK HAS SUGGESTED, IN PARA
3 REFTEL C, IT MIGHT BE USEFUL FOR GUB ALSO TO APPROACH RLG DIRECT-
LY ON THIS MATTER, PERHAPS THROUGH THE LAO EMBASSY IN BANGKOK.
THIS SUBJECT, AND USEFULNESS OF GUB/RLG COMMUNICATION, POINTS UP
AGAIN POSSIBLE UTILITY OF GUB ESTABLISHING SOME FORM OF REPRESENTA-
TION IN VIENTIANE TO CONDUCT LIAISON WITH RLG ON NARCOTICS
MATTERS.

5. WE WELCOME OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER FURTHER AT
TRI-COUNTRY NARCOTICS MEETING SEPTEMBER 18-20, AS PROPOSED
REFTEL C.
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